Intersecting interests

Intersecting Interests: Developments in Networks and Flows of Information and Expertise in Architectural History

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This special issue of *Fabrications* on "Networks and Flows", provides an opportune moment to reflect upon some ongoing initiatives with respect to the historical theme of networking in architecture. In what follows we provide some perspective on the growing significance of this methodological shift towards understanding architecture in its regional and global capacity, especially as it has developed in the European academy over the past five to ten years. This report focuses on the activities of a European Union collaborative known as "European Architecture Beyond Europe". The collaborative was formed in 2010 and funded by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology program (COST), and ran for four years up to May 2014. Referred to by COST as an "Action", this collaborative was designed to establish a network of academic researchers from across the EU with common interests in the history of imperial, colonial, and transnational architectures.[1] Although the funded meetings and activities of the Action only lasted a short period of time, the creation of a specialist scholarly periodical *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)* has since continued the Action's agenda and sustained cooperation across a number of EU member states.[2] An account and rationale of the Action's formation and activities are given here, with a view to reiterating the importance of understanding networking and its consequences in architectural scholarship, and also how further exploration in this area continues to shape the future of research in colonial and postcolonial architecture and urbanism.[3] This account is followed by three perspectives by each of the authors relating to their own experiences in this area of research.

COST Action "European Architecture Beyond Europe": Motives and Rationale

Established in 2010, the COST Action "European Architecture Beyond Europe" aimed at articulating a broader understanding of the transfer of European architectural ideas, knowledge, and expertise across the globe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By focusing on specific vectors of transmission, largely in the context of European imperial expansion, and

[1] Further information about the Action can be found at: http://www.cost.eu/COST_Actions/isch/IS0904. See also, http://architecturebeyond.eu.huma-num.fr/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/2012brochureCOST.pdf

[2] For the journal, see: https://abe.revues.org/

[3] It should be noted for this audience that under the reciprocal arrangements between COST and non-EU member states, a number of scholars from Australia – Stuart King (University of Tasmania), Andrew Leach (Griffith University), and Deborah van der Platt (University of Queensland) – were involved in the Action.

including the multiple and intersecting connections between those vectors, the Action attempted to transcend more conventional frameworks of bilateral colonial channels (e.g. French architecture in Algeria, or British architecture in India), suggesting that these well-trodden paths represent but one aspect of a larger multifaceted history. Combining architectural history with area studies, the intention was to map and analyse more complex patterns of dissemination, including inter-colonial and cross-border relationships. Moving beyond architecture per se, one of the challenges of the Action was to contribute to writing and scholarship on the global history of modern European culture, including overseas expansion and transnational dynamics.

The premise underlying the Action arose from a recognition that at recent international conferences pleas were being made for the blurring of the (spatial) boundaries of the discipline of architectural history in order to explore "neglected geographies", and to move beyond binary dichotomies such as the persistence of the trope of "East versus West". While a first step in this direction involves enlarging the documentation of architecture in these neglected regions, scholars were also beginning to argue that it was time to make room in the historiography of architecture for the "intertwined histories of seemingly distant locales".[4] There was an emerging consciousness that the development of architecture and planning in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe could not be understood without taking into account what occurred overseas, and similarly that these extra-European modernities were intimately linked to processes of Europeanisation, responding to social and cultural changes at a local level. Although historians of empire have both recognised and accepted the intersecting nature of domestic and imperial histories, particularly those working on the British world, the discipline of architectural history has been slow to react.

Re-examining the history of European architecture from such a perspective, and therefore meeting the concerns of historians interested in transnational phenomena, obviously challenges established methodologies and conventional narratives. It requires working beyond national frameworks and points of reference (both post-WWII political boundaries in Europe, and those of postcolonial nation states), asking for more comparative analysis at both an empirical and theoretical level. It was believed that the creation of a pan-European international network of scholars could provide a unique (and necessary) platform for innovative research and discussion, breaking the isolation in which the scholarly community involved in such research

[4] *Repenser les limites: l'architecture à travers l'espace, le temps et les disciplines* (SAH/INHA symposium, Paris, 2005). In particular the panel "Transnational dynamics: new apprehensions of Modernity and colonies". See proceedings online at: http://inha.revues.org/418.

has traditionally worked. Moreover, it was felt that existing international forums were largely dominated by the initiatives of US-based learned societies. There was a perceived need to continue encouraging European collaboration, thus providing space for alternate views and voices.

It will be familiar to most readers of this piece that scholarship on colonial architecture and urbanism has been one of the most dynamic subfields of architectural history in recent decades. Needless to say, much of this scholarship has been dominated by a post-colonial theoretical perspective. Driven by Continental European (particularly French) poststructuralist theory, in particular Foucaldian methods of discourse analysis, this perspective has been propagated throughout the Anglophone world via the American academy and its affiliate institutions. Following early assessments by Anthony D. King (1976), colonial architecture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was posited as an efficient political tool meant to assert European power through the production of monumental architecture and the practice of "urban apartheid".[5] Its forms and norms have been analysed as experiments in social engineering that addressed colonial problems – experiments that were then visited back upon the home nation after having been tested overseas.[6] Innovative and subtler "forms of dominance" have been detected in the adaptive strategies to local environments pioneered by British and French imperial architecture(s).[7] After sociology, anthropology, political sciences and geography, historical research has entered the field, approaching the topic as an extraterritorial by-product of national histories.

But recent research in European, Ottoman, and African archives has confirmed that a larger range of agencies, actors, and institutions than initially envisioned were involved in the production of colonial space, be they Italian entrepreneurs in pre-colonial Tunisia and the Belgian Congo, Armenian and Greek architects in Ottoman Istanbul and British Cairo, or European-trained local engineers in Egypt and Turkey. All point to the importance of local and regional cosmopolitan diasporas, and the presence of autochthonous actors in the formation of architectural modernity in non-Western settings. A similar role was played by the concessions

[5] A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London: Routledge, 1976); and J. L. Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
[6] P. Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
[7] *Forms of Dominance: on the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*, ed. N. AlSayyad (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992). See also T. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London: Faber, 1989); G. Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991).

offered to international companies, or specific European agencies, in distant lands through processes of "informal" imperial influence, oftentimes without involving or requiring direct colonial intervention.

These scenarios question the very efficacy of colonial architecture as a conceptual category and its ability to capture the large array of built forms produced by the more or less brutal, direct, and mediated encounters of European aesthetics and techniques within non-European geographies and societies. New concepts such as "indigenous modernities", "entangled worlds", "transnational agency", and "shared legacies" are being discussed in an effort to describe and analyse more adequately the material culture resulting from such cultural encounters.[8] This has encouraged research into colonial, non-colonial, and westernising modernities as connected, rather than isolated, phenomena. A need to comprehend and model better the information flows and patterns of local adaptation of European architecture worldwide is now shared by many researchers, as is the necessity to renew the lexical and analytical categories used to qualify and discuss colonial architecture.[9]

Thus, although the Action included working groups dealing with printed media, documentation, and infrastructures for research, Working Group 1 (WG1), entitled "Actors and Networks of Expertise", was understood as central to realising the Action's intellectual and historiographic ambitions in this regard.

Actors and Networks of Expertise: Intentions and Outcomes

[8] An example of shared legacies in relation to India can be seen in P. Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise: Urban Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). See also W. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern. Constructing and Imagining a colonial city* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). For other recent scholarship engaging with the phenomenon of transnational agency in post-colonial contexts, see, *Cold War Transfer: architecture and planning from socialist countries in the "Third World,"* special issue of *The Journal of Architecture*, eds. L. Stanek and T. Avermaete 17, no. 3 (2012); L. Stanek, "Mobilities of Architecture in the Global Cold War: From Socialist Poland to Kuwait and Back," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 4, no. 2 (2015): 365-98; C. Roskam, "Non-Aligned Architecture: China's Designs on and in Ghana and Guinea, 1955-1992," *Architectural History* 58 (2015): 261-91; H. Yacobi, *Israel and Africa: a Genealogy of Moral Geography* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2015). On the issue of mutual heritage in relation to the Mediterranean, see M. Volait, "Patrimoines partagés : un regard décentré et élargi sur l'architecture et la ville des XIX^{e} et XX^{e} siècles en Méditerranée," in *Architecture coloniale et patrimoine, l'expérience française*, eds. B. Toulier and M. Pabois (Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 2005), 115-24; J. Lagae, "From 'Patrimoine partagé' to 'Whose Heritage'? Critical reflections on colonial built heritage in the city of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo," in *Remembering, Forgetting and City Builders*, eds. T. Fenster and H. Yacobi (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 175-91.

[9] For a broader discussion of the issues, see K. James-Chakraborty, "Beyond Postcolonialism: New Directions for the History of Nonwestern Architecture," *Frontiers of Architectural Research* 3 (2014): 1–9; J. Lagae and B. Toulier, "De l'outre-mer au transnational. Glissements de perspectives dans l'historiographie de l'architecture coloniale et postcoloniale," *Revue de l'Art* 186, no. 4 (2014): 45-56.

The objective of this research track within the wider COST Action was to look at the multiplicity of actors that shaped the transfer of European architecture overseas. Traditionally, research in architectural history has focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the activity of architects and their patrons. While a central place was given to these particular actors in the design and construction process, the Action was tasked with looking at other actors involved in the dissemination of European architecture outside Europe, such as engineers, contractors, and more collective if amorphous entities such as departments of public works. This shift of focus was intended to extend the range of architecture under scrutiny, by allowing researchers involved in the group to consider, more mainstream productions – even modest or banal constructions – made without professional designers that often comprised the bulk of the colonial built environment.

Also discussed were European-trained designers of non-Western origin, who played an important role in the transplantation of European aesthetics and techniques overseas in the period under consideration. Typical examples include French-educated Armenian architects in the late Ottoman Empire, or the Levantine architects trained in France or Lebanon that were active in British Cairo.[10] Indeed, European schools of engineering and architecture represented a major dissemination channel through which European architectures were carried abroad – one that is still alive today. Major public works performed by European companies outside of Europe were instrumental in the international circulation of European architectural expertise. Other non-official or non-governmental channels under investigation included Christian missionary organisations and their buildings, or the military and technical cooperation developed by Prussia (later Germany) and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even less studied, but of great importance, was migration, through the Greek, Italian or Jewish diasporas active in the Eastern Mediterranean and throughout Africa. Again, although the idea of networks and networking as a kind of "mesh" or "web" has had much greater traction in mainstream historical research in recent years, the history of architecture has been slow in reacting to this.

The working group endeavoured to map these distinct networks based on education, socio-religious identity, and corporate activity, with a view to articulating their possible intersections. The intention was to make full use of the wealth of data already collected at national or case-study level (biographical dictionaries, alumni gazetteers, etc.) and to cross-reference these findings in order to define a theoretical and methodological framework for studying such circulation flows.

[10] For the emergence of the architectural profession in Egypt, see M. Volait, *Architectes et architectures de l'Egypte moderne: genèse et essor d'une expertise technique locale* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005).

To this end, several meetings were organised at the early stages of the Action to get to know the research interests of group members, and to look for potential points of convergence. One of the themes that emerged from these initial meetings was the appearance following WWII of a particular type of practitioner: that of the "global/nomadic expert", active across many countries and continents, often in the service of new international agencies such as the United Nations or the World Health Organisation. Work undertaken by several members of the group resulted in a themed issue of *ABE Journal* on this topic.[11] Other themes that were discussed at these group meetings were the need to enlarge our understanding of the emergence of "tropical architecture" beyond the Anglophone world, and the intricacies of the relationship between migration, exile and architecture. During the Action's annual conferences, these themes were taken up in one or more sessions, but have yet to result in publications.

Given the concern for networks and networking, WG1 also looked into various forms of best practice with respect to mapping such networks. Historians specialising in prosopography and Actor Network Theory (ANT), for instance, were invited to participate and present their thoughts. It soon became apparent from these workshops that, despite the existence of a number of good biographical dictionaries and databases of architects, we still lack an overall, international framework for collecting and sharing the necessary information in a coherent manner. Such a framework would allow for an efficient and productive exchange of data, bringing to the fore patterns and connections that could deepen our understanding of transnational flows of expertise. If we had initially planned for one of the outputs of the Action to be a digital biographical dictionary of actors, however rudimentary, this would at least have started to highlight the connections and networks of expertise based on a variety of vectors, and would hopefully have stimulated further inter-colonial, transnational, and comparative research. There is much to be done in this respect.

Having said this, the group's exposure to digital technologies that are currently available in assisting ANT research, introduced during one of the training schools organised by the Action, has already proved useful for some members of the Action. Informed as to the possibilities offered by software developed by Médialab at Sciences Po, Paris, under the supervision of Bruno Latour (gephi, table2net), Rachel Lee, for instance, succeeded in producing a quantitative analysis of the networks of architect Otto Koenigsberger as part of her PhD research, enabled

[11] "Global experts 'off radar'," ed. J. Lagae, *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)* 4 (2013).

her to identify some unexpected patterns and thus clarifying some of Koenigsberger's apparently strange career moves and unexpected job opportunities.[12]

These resources have yet to reach their full potential, but are envisaged as an on-going activity of the Action, becoming part of the wider remit of its online, open-access periodical *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)*, launched in 2012.

ABE Journal: a New Scholarly Forum for the Study of Architecture

Several related concerns prompted the launch of the journal in 2012. One was that modern architecture outside the West features poorly in the literature devoted to architectural history, and when it does surface, it is primarily in the guise of conspicuous global "starchitecture" or colonial icons, as if nothing else worthy of study was built worldwide during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Another problem is the national or civilizational frames commonly used to analyse modernity. It is assumed that modernity is intrinsically Western, and reached non-Western settings only through imperialism.

It must be remembered that autochthonous aspirations to change and innovate also paved the way to new architecture. It is perhaps time to reverse the focus on the local production of modernity, rather than on its diffusion from the West.[13] This is not to suggest that "indigenous modernities" grew in isolation. For instance, many Egyptian architects were educated in Europe, the US, or the Soviet Union, and kept ties with their places of training. They joined regional or international professional networks, were exposed to Turkish or Brazilian Modernism, and eventually worked out of Egypt or in partnership with non-Egyptian associates. Even during the colonial era, the range of actors involved in the production of architecture was larger than commonly imagined. This is suggested, for instance, by the building activity of an association created in 1886 to assist Italian missions abroad that became a major builder in Egypt and North Africa during the interwar years, promoting a type of "Mediterranean" architecture that distinguished itself from the official architecture produced by British or French colonial powers.[14] The challenge of the journal therefore was to provide a credible and scholarly forum

[12] R. Lee, "Negotiating Modernities: Otto Koenigsberger's Works and Network in Exile (1933-1951)," Dr.-Ing. Dissertation (Berlin University of Technology, 2014). See *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)* 5 (2014) for summary.

[13] For an early example of scholarship shifting the focus to local agency, see *Urbanism: Imported or exported? Native aspirations and foreign plans*, eds. J. Nasr and M. Volait (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2003).

[14] A. Nuzzaci, "L'opera dell'Associazione Nazionale per Soccorrere I Missionari Italiani (ANMI) fuori d'Europa dal 1886 al 1941," *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)* 2 (2012). See also, E. Godoli et A.

through which to apprehend the diverse, multi-directional, transnational dynamics and conditions that made architecture "modern" anywhere, and the variety of connections that sustained it.

ABE Journal was therefore established to promote exchange and collaborative research in this specialised area of scholarship. The architectural historians on the editorial and advisory boards of the journal, all of whom are based in Europe, are specifically engaged in inter-colonial or transnational studies of some kind, whether their interest lies in exile, travel, and migration of architects, the internationalisation of building culture, imperial expansion, postcolonial nation-building processes, the role of international organisations, the architecture of diplomacy, or the intercontinental flux of ideas and concepts. The premise behind the journal is that there is still much to excavate in relation to these topics, and that the journal's online, open-access platform would provide the ideal forum through which to publicise this research.

Content-wise, the primary interest of the journal is to encourage a historical approach to the interconnected nature of architectural production and practice, broadly understood, through the study of phenomena and situations that cut across national or cultural lines. The core of the journal is a guest-edited section including three to five articles on a given topic, but *ABE Journal* also welcomes stand-alone articles. Topics addressed so far range from corporate patronage and global expertise, to innovative engineering and socialist networks. The emphasis on history explains why the journal has a permanent rubric, entitled "Documents/Sources", which is specifically devoted to presenting primary material relevant to the journal's fields of interest, in an effort to point out unknown sources or ways of reading them. Other regular rubrics include "Dissertation Abstracts" and "Book Reviews" designed to keep pace with new research and increase the circulation of knowledge among the scholarly community concerned.

An important goal of the journal is to complicate our understanding of the forces (including power) that shape architecture and to foment debate among a plurality of academic perspectives. Hence the "Debate" section, currently guest-edited by Mark Crinson of the University of Manchester, which was created to give visibility to European research and in return to expose it to other scholarly traditions. Languages of publication are currently English, French, or Italian, but we hope to be able to include others in the future, such as Spanish and German. In any case, abstracts and keywords are all made available in five languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish).

Nuzzaci, *L'Associazione Nazionale per soccorrere i Missionari italiani (ANSMI) e i suoi ingegneri* (Firenze: Maschietto, 2009).

The institutional support provided by the French *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* allows the journal to work without charging an Article Processing Charge (APC) to authors, or subscription fees to libraries. The journal is also housed and managed by the French-based Revues.org electronic platform for the humanities and social sciences, home to over 400 digital periodicals, giving it extensive exposure and reach. The journal's specific focus on architecture outside the West from a transnational perspective also makes it unique. There are other journals interested in non-Western architecture, such as the *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, but none are concerned specifically with connecting a variety of world regions in the way we propose.

The section that follows presents three perspectives on the conceptual re-framing of the subject around issues of actors and agency, architectural categorisation, professional geography, and the circulation and transferal of ideas between and among nation states and their colonial empires.

Three Perspectives from the Crossroads: Challenging Architectural Narratives

"Architects" and "Architecture": Realigning the Worlds of British Architecture

Considering architecture from the perspective of networks and networking, particularly in a global context, raises questions about the role of the architect. As mentioned, much architectural history has concerned itself with the idea of genius, authorship, and subsequent influence, focusing on periods, movements, and national/regional schools of theory and design. However, from an imperial and/or transnational perspective, the role – indeed, the very idea – of the "architect" is often blurred. In some cases it was virtually non-existent. But this did not mean that architecture was not possible. This was especially the case early in the expansion of European empires. As frontiers shifted, professional expertise was often lacking, leaving it to people on the ground to forge ahead, come what may. In such circumstances it was vernacular forms and types that prevailed, at least initially. Or, in some cases, what expertise did exist was soon found wanting or outmoded by subsequent waves of immigration, leaving a significant gap between reality and expectation. While such scenarios are numerous, one that was raised and discussed in WG1 of the COST Action was missionary architecture and the role of clergymen in bringing new forms, types, and knowledge of architecture to frontier environments, both within and beyond recognised territorial boundaries. As missionaries were sometimes labelled the "shock troops" of empire (whether they liked it or not), paving the way for more systematic forms of colonialism to follow, they were often found operating in extreme and/or remote

locations. But this did not necessarily mean that they were unable to engage with or make architecture. Buildings were obviously germane to their endeavour.

Achieving architecture in these contexts relied upon several different but interrelated types of cooperation, extending between the localities in question and the metropolis (and back again), as well as among clergymen scattered throughout a given region or the wider world. In the case of Anglican missionaries, for instance, this process involved a sense of corporate identity through which particular ideas and strategies concerning liturgy and conversion were fundamental, having been inculcated through education, training, and practice. In addition, organisations such as the Colonial Bishoprics' Fund, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) strengthened this identity and its concomitant forms of agency through establishing substantial worldwide networks of recruitment, funding, and policy formation.[15] Moreover, by the time we reach the mid-nineteenth century, new concerns over religious architecture had emerged in the form of the Puginian-inspired Gothic Revival, leading to the formation of dedicated architectural societies at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where most Anglican clergymen were educated. Many training for holy orders in the 1840s and 1850s were brought within the ambit of these societies, absorbing and promoting their agenda(s). The Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society was the most authoritative voice on matters of modern church design and construction at the time, considering church extension in Britain's colonies central to its remit. Even in missionary training schools, such as St Augustine's, Canterbury, aspiring young clergymen were taught skills in practical building in preparation for a life of toil at the "edge of civilisation". As missionaries then fanned out across the known and un-known worlds, they took codified architectural ideas with them, especially those affiliated with the SPG.[16]

These various strands of education, training, membership, and corporate agency – some formal, others informal – constituted a close-knit, worldwide network of personnel, resources, and expertise. Importantly, this network led to colonial and missionary clergymen not only knowing about architecture, and understanding its design and construction principles, but also playing a leading role in getting "proper" churches built, whether in ephemeral materials such as timber

[15] G. A. Bremner, "The Corporatisation of Global Anglicanism: Architecture, Organisation, and Faith-based Patronage in the Nineteenth-Century British Colonial World," *Architecture Beyond Europe (ABE)* 2 (2012). For the CMS, see E. Turner, "The Church Missionary Society and Architecture in the Mission Field: Evangelical Anglican Perspectives on Church Building Abroad, c.1850-1900," *Architectural History* 58 (2015): 197-228.

[16] For a systematic study of Anglican architecture in a global context, see G. A. Bremner, *Imperial Gothic: Religious Architecture and High Anglican Culture in the British Empire, c.1840-1870* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013).

and bamboo, or more substantial ones such as brick and stone. Such a far-reaching, theoretically-informed programme for architectural development simply would not have been possible without the existence of this network. It gives us a new appreciation of these buildings as creations that were not dictated or driven by professional oversight but more by informal and amateur channels of knowledge and support. Given their geographical spread and formal genesis, they are better understood as a common set or species of structure that was both shaped and linked by these channels of knowledge and amateur expertise.

Understanding buildings in this way distracts us, at least temporarily, from analysing them formally or stylistically as *objets d'art* (although one can certainly do this), allowing us to foreground the types of agency that brought them into being and that largely sustained their formal and theoretical coherence. As a type of collective enterprise, this programme for architectural development drew upon a live process of continual adaptation and improvement through the exercising of the global network, channelled between clergymen and back through the architectural societies in the metropolis. This was architecture as a corporate enterprise in which architects played a role, and in which design indicators and attributes were important, but not necessarily the only or leading factors. In other words, this programme makes more sense when seen as a collaborative history of actors and agency rather than as one of individual architects and their design choices (and architectural meaning). It is concerned more with the ontology of architecture rather than its aesthetic or representational capacities.

It is important to note, of course, that not all church-building projects or architects, whether in the colonies or at "home", were directly plugged into this network, but it is true to say that the flow of ideas had a definite osmotic effect over time and across large expanses of space, even among CMS missionaries. After having emanated and gained a certain currency, these ideas were slowly naturalised through forms of local agency, including the growth of professional bodies. This recalls the idea of empire as something more akin to a "web" of dispersed and interconnected nodal points rather than one in which "centre" and "periphery" are linked in a linear and isolated fashion like the spokes of a wheel.[17] For instance, as Thomas Metcalf has argued, the Raj in British India operated as a powerful administrative hub within the wider

[17] These methodological developments are probably best outlined in A. Lester, "Imperial circuits and networks: geographies of the British empire," *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 124-41. See also, A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); T. Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 13-17; A. Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and G. B. Magee and A. S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods, and Capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 22-63.

British world, affecting the political, economic, and cultural life of the entire Indian Ocean sphere of influence. The regional web of contacts and connections that constituted this influence extended to architecture, resulting in the export of ideas and expertise through departments of public works, including the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture which could be found in locations as far east as Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, and as far west as East Africa.[18]

These enquiries raise a second question concerning what might be considered "architecture" in the first place. Is a carefully-planned church made of grass a work of architecture in the same sense as Lincoln Cathedral? This is obviously an allusion to the famous comparison staged by Nikolaus Pevsner in his *An Outline of European Architecture* (1943). But here the distinction between what constitutes a mere building and architecture is not so clear, if at all. Although tiny, and built of a material as meagre and ephemeral as grass, the chapel of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa at Morambala (Mozambique) is no bike shed, as Pevsner would have it. Again, traditionally, histories of architecture have tended to focus on iconic and representative buildings and architects, whether sponsored by individuals, corporations, or the state. But what of the amazingly widespread, if somewhat banal and mundane, array of structures that facilitated global empire and its myriad connections?

It is perhaps worth recalling at this point Mark Crinson's observation that architecture echoed, inflected and was integral to many of the other practices and relationships that empire required for its furtherance.[19] Importantly, architecture in this sense cannot be restricted to masterworks, but must include various forms of what would otherwise be termed infrastructure. I do not mean roads, canals or bridges in the narrowest sense of that term, as important as these are, but rather "grey architecture", such as factories, warehouses, mills, agricultural facilities, staging posts *et cetera*. These are the kinds of buildings that made up by far the larger part of colonial and imperial architecture, especially in its extended and interconnected sense. Take for instance the trading infrastructure of global mercantile organisations such as the East India Company, or smaller firms such as Jardine, Matheson & Co., and their processing, storage, and shipping facilities for commodities such as opium, tea, and cotton; or, the castles, forts, baracoons, trunks, and booths that Louis Nelson has described in relation to the networks that underpinned the West African slave trade; or, as explored by Wendy Roberts, the kinds of commercial and administrative architectures that lay at the

[18] T. R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 46-67. For how this hybridised, "Saracenic"-style architecture was worked out in East Africa, see Sarah Longair, *Cracks in the Dome: Fractured Histories of Empire in the Zanzibar Museum, 1897-1964* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, 72, 37-9, 69-109.
[19] M. Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 4.

foundation of primary production companies such as the Van Diemen's Land Company in Australia.[20]

Much of this type of architecture remains both understudied and underappreciated, but has the potential to realign our understanding of the history of architecture in a global sense. As Sibel Zandi-Sayek has recently argued, when considering what a global history of architecture might look like, we perhaps need to abandon our long-held canonistic view of architecture, reconstituting it along lines that transcend the national and cultural as logical containers in favour of "encounters, connections, and transactions" that are geographically diffuse.[21] This of course reminds one of George Kubler's conceptions concerning the geography of art, the essence of which remain as relevant and urgent today as they did in the 1960s.[22] In other words, if we are to conceive of a global architecture seriously, we must conceive of it in conventionally very different ways. In this equation, the idea of the network will be crucial. To be sure, this may not comprise all, or even the most inspiring, aspect of the built environment that we would wish to discuss in such a history, but there is no question that it resides at the heart of where the built environment intersects with the major currents of human and world history.

Alex Bremner

Middle-East Modern: Uncovering the Role of Networking in Early Twentieth-Century Egypt

As mentioned, many Egyptian architects were educated outside of Egypt in the twentieth century. This enabled them to establish and maintain both regional and international professional networks, providing opportunities abroad or in partnership with non-Egyptian associates at home. This increasing mobility, and the contacts it facilitated, was instrumental in the rise of Egyptian Modernism. The École des Beaux-arts may have been the most noteworthy architectural school in Paris, but it was by no means the only one that attracted international

[20] L. Nelson, "Architectures of West African Enslavement," *Buildings & Landscapes* 21, no. 1 (2014): 88-125; W. Roberts, "Company Transfer: the Architectural Dialect at the Edges of Empire," *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, ed. C. Schnoor 31 (2014): 591–600.
[21] S. Zandi-Sayek, "The Unsung of the Canon: Does a Global Architectural History Need New Landmarks?" *ABE Journal (Architecture Beyond Europe)* 6 (2014), para. 1.
[22] For instance, see Kubler in *Santos: An Exhibition of the Religious Folk Art of New Mexico, with an Essay by George Kubler* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1964). See also, G. Kubler, "Two Modes of Franciscan Architecture: New Mexico and California," in *Studies in Ancient American and European Art: The Collected Essays of George Kubler*, ed. T. F. Reece (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 34-8; T. Costa Da Kaufmann, "The Geography of Art: Historiography, Issues, Perspectives," in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, eds. K. Zijlmans and W. van Damme (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), 167-92.

students. Mustafâ Fahmî (1886-1972), the acclaimed pioneer of the profession of architecture in Egypt – *al-râ'id al-mi'mâri al-âwwal*, in the words of his fellow architect Tawfiq Ahmad Abd al-Gawwad (a graduate of the Liverpool School of Architecture) – gained his architectural training from the École spéciale des Travaux publics (ESTP) in Paris.[23] This was a technical school with curricula in several branches of engineering, including architecture. The school trained a number of architects that were active in North Africa and the Middle East, from Casablanca and Algiers to Cairo and Tel-Aviv, in the first half of the twentieth century. Fahmî was one of its early Middle Eastern graduates in 1912.[24] Many followed in subsequent decades. By 1937, ESTP's alumni in Egypt numbered around 90, helping disseminate a middling Modernism much in line with what their fellow graduates were doing all around the world, especially outside the West.[25]

Once back home, Fahmî played an active role organising the architectural profession in Egypt. He helped establish a society of architects as early as 1917, and convened annual archaeological excursions and banquets in the Beaux-arts tradition that strengthened professional ties among Egyptian architects and helped foster a sense of group identity. He also did a great deal to connect the emerging Egyptian profession to the international scene. From 1935 onwards, he led an Egyptian delegation to the *Réunions internationales d'architecture* [RIA] – a network created in 1932 by architects Pierre Vago and André Bloc, the directors of the newly-founded journal *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui,* with the view of offering an alternate to the exclusive and dogmatic *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* [CIAM]. Thanks to their connections with RIA, Egyptian architects were among the first national groups to join the International Union of Architects created in 1947 (through the merger of several organisations, including the RIA), where they represented the entire Middle East for some years. The Egyptian chapter lost this role in 1953, when in the aftermath of the Free Officers' *coup d'état* in July 1952, the Egyptian Syndicate of Engineers was constrained by the new regime, ceasing its financial contribution to IUA. The representation of the Middle East in that arena was subsequently taken over by Israel.[26]

[23] "Abd al-Gawwad," in T. Ahmad, *Misr al-'Imâra fil-qarn al-'ishrin [Egyptian Architecture in the 20th century*] (Cairo: Maktbat al-Anjilu al-Misriyah, 1989), 40.
[24] See biographical entry in M. Volait, *Architectes et Architectures de l'Égypte Moderne (1820-1950): Genèse et Essor d'une Expertise Locale* (Paris : Maisonneuve & Larose, 2005), 418.
[25] "Liste alphabétique des membres de l'association des ingénieurs ETP résidents en Egypte", appended to a letter of the director of ETP to Mr. Habert, head of the ETP representation in Cairo, 5 November 1937, private papers of ESTP, Paris.
[26] M. Volait, "Mediating and domesticating modernity in Egypt: uncovering some forgotten pages," *Docomomo Journal*, special issue *Modern Architecture in the Middle East* 35 (2006): 30-35.

The rising presence of Egyptian architects within international networks also led to the launch in 1939 of the first architectural magazine in Arabic, entitled *al-'Imâra* ("architecture" in Arabic). Its editor-in-chief, Sayyed Karim (1911-2005), recalled that it was while attending architectural conferences in Eastern Europe that the idea first formed, having realised how little their audiences knew of Egyptian architecture.[27] When participants at a meeting in Warsaw in 1938 were asked to list architectural journals available in their countries, Karim took the opportunity to announce that a new Egyptian journal would indeed be forthcoming in January of 1939.[28]

Al-'Imâra lasted until 1959, after which it was formally discontinued. During these twenty years, the magazine strived to offer visibility to Egyptian and Arabic architecture. Appearing six to ten times per year, it published projects designed and built by Arab architects, as well as critical essays on architectural or planning issues of consequence to its national and regional readership.[29] Moreover, the journal introduced key figures in international architecture to its Arab-speaking audience. In 1942, for instance, it published a monograph on Otto Salvisberg, the mentor under which Karim had trained at the *Eidgenössisches Technische Hochschule* in Zurich, and who had been encouraging him to voice Modern Movement ideas in the Middle East. In 1952, a special issue featured the experience of Modernism in Brazil, presenting projects by Oscar Niemeyer. In 1957, the magazine discussed high-rise architecture, showcasing designs by Ieoh Ming Pei, Le Corbusier, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Karim, and the few colleagues of his who managed the journal, also opened its pages to papers on subsidised housing and town planning in the region which had been presented at successive Arab Engineering Conferences [*mu'tamar al-handasî al-ʿarabî*].

In the wake of the formation of the Arab League in 1945, a group of Syrian, Palestinian, and Egyptian engineers from Alexandria started meeting to exchange views on regional matters in all fields of engineering. Attendance of the second Arab Engineering conference in Cairo from 9-12 April 1946 reached almost 1000 delegates. Subsequent conferences were held in Damascus (1947), Beirut (1950), Cairo (1954), Baghdad (1955), Beirut (1959), Cairo (1963), Baghdad (1964), Jerusalem (1966), and Kuwait (1969).[30]

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[27] M. ElShahed, *Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936-1967* (PhD thesis, New York University, 2015), chapter 1 *passim*.
[28] S. Karim, "1939-1949," *al-'Imara* 9, no. 1-2 (1949): 1-6.
[29] M. Volait, *L'architecture moderne en Égypte et la revue al-'Imâra (1939-1959)* (Cairo: CEDEJ, 1988). Harvard University's holdings of the periodical are available online in pager-turner format at http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/17512206 .
[30] Recommendations in architecture and planning issued by the Arab Engineering Conferences are presented in Y. Muhammad 'Ayd, "Qararât al-muʾtamarât al-handasiyya fîl-bilâd al-ᶜarabiyya fî al-handasa

What emerges from this is that new professional geographies, deeply intertwined with pan-Arabism, rapidly took shape during the early to mid-twentieth century.[31] The IUA delegation that visited Cairo in 1950 clearly perceived that Europe was not anymore a focal point for Egyptian architects: the Middle East and Gulf states were where the future lay.[32] In fact, Egyptian architects, together with their Palestinian and Lebanese peers, contributed significantly to the building of cities in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia from the 1950s onward, while providing much of the academic staff to man their young departments of architecture.[33] That the story of their contribution to contemporary architecture is virtually unknown offers pause for thought not only concerning how traditional architectural history has been and still is dominated by Western-language scholarship, but also how the networks formed by practitioners in different parts of the world have been largely ignored in understanding the dynamics behind the movement of architectural forms and ideas.

Mercedes Volait

Building in Tropical Belgian Congo: a Case of "Selective Borrowing"

In his review of Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem's magisterial *Histoire du Zaïre: De l'héritage ancien à l'âge contemporain* (1997), Jean-Luc Vellut, the most prominent historian of Belgian colonialism, voiced his concern over the "nationalist" nature of the book's narrative, arguing that more attention should have been paid to "the realities of a world advanced in globalization", and hence to transnational and trans-local spheres of influence.[34] Vellut's review holds an important lesson for anyone venturing to write the history of colonial and postcolonial architecture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We can no longer limit the narrative exclusively to the agency of Belgian architects, entrepreneurs, or patrons. Recent research has highlighted the importance of non-Belgian actors in the production of the colonial built environment in Congo.[35]

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al-miᶜmâriyya wa al-takhtît (1945-1969)," *al-magalla al-miᶜmâriyya* 3, no. 6 (1986): 96-104. The Conferences met irregularly after 1969.

[31] For an overview, see *Architecture from the Arab World (1914-2014): A Selection*, ed. G. Arbid (Bahrain: Ministry of Culture, 2014).

[32] Personal interview with Pierre Vago, 19 July 1990.

[33] For Kuwait, see R. Fabbri, S. Saragoça Soares, and R. Camacho, *Modern Architecture Kuwait 1949–1989* (Zurich: Verlag Niggli, 2016).

[34] J.-L. Vellut, "Prestige et pauvreté de l'histoire nationale. A propos d'une histoire générale du Congo," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 77 (1999) : 480-517. The work reviewed is I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire du Zaïre. De l'héritage ancien à l'âge contemporain* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Duculot, 1997).

[35] In particular the research on the city of Lubumbashi done at Ghent University. See S. Boonen and J. Lagae, "Scenes from a changing colonial 'Far West': Picturing the early urban landscape and colonial

Moreover, since the early days of Belgian colonisation in Central Africa, the development of expertise regarding building in tropical Congo was underscored by a process of what can be described as "selective borrowing", an idea drawn from the insights of planning historian Stephen Ward.[36] Colonial building practices and guidelines in the Belgian Congo were based largely on experiences in other European colonial territories, without much if any new knowledge added. This policy of "selective borrowing", as well as Congo's central location on the African continent – a territory surrounded by British, French, Portuguese, and, at one time, German colonies – makes the case of this Belgian colony particularly useful for examining transnational and trans-local flows of expertise during the colonial era. Focus on a Belgian colonial example potentially counters the hegemonic presence of Anglophone or Francophone networks in historiographical representations of colonial and tropical architecture thus far.

What is known is that the early colonial policies of King Leopold II tapped into lessons learnt from other European nations, in a variety of domains, including medicine, law, and agriculture. One of the first manuals on how to build a house in tropical Congo, published in 1911 by Edmond Leplae, then director of the Agricultural Service of the Ministry of Colonies, forms a case in point. Produced following his trip to plantations across the globe to study agricultural techniques adapted to the tropics, his manual provided a wealth of visual documentation on plantation houses (plans and photographs) which he saw in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malacca, Java, North Africa, Brasil, and the southern United States. Many of the significantly diverse projects depicted in his manual had spatial lay-outs reminiscent of the tropical bungalow. This typology had already reached the Belgian Congo in the late nineteenth century via internationally influential publications such as *How to Live in Tropical Africa* (1895), written by the British medical doctor John Murray. However, for Edmond Leplae, tropical architecture was more than just a question of building type or construction: it was about a way of living. Criticising the Belgian approach, he observed that: "the moral and sanitary role of the house has been admirably understood by the best colonizers of our time, the British and the Dutch. Their colonial houses are as perfect as ours are rudimentary, as elegant as ours are often hideous".[37] Discussions on colonial house design in Congo that occurred in subsequent years were conducted within the milieu of the *Association pour le perfectionnement du matériel colonial*, an

society of cosmopolitan Lubumbashi, 1910-1931," *Stichproben: Vienna Journal of African Studies*, no. 28 (2015): 11-54.

[36] S. V. Ward, *Planning the Twentieth-Century City. The Advanced Capitalist World* (Chichester: Wiley, 2002), 403. Ward defines "selective borrowing" – in contrast to "synthetic borrowing" – as a process "where no identifiable innovation resulted from the borrowed ideas or practices", and puts Belgium to the fore as a country which used such an approach for defining its urban planning policy and practices.

[37] E. Leplae, "Plans et photographies d'habitations pour plantations coloniales," *Bulletin Agricole du Congo belge* 2, no. 1 (1911): 1-77.

organization founded in 1910 and tasked with developing what the historian Daniel R. Headrick has termed "tools of empire".[38] These discussions provide further evidence that the Belgian colonialists looked beyond national boundaries to define their action. British and Dutch examples remained highly influential, while building components from German industry were also investigated for their possible applications.[39]

A similar process of "selective borrowing" underlies *Habitations coloniales et conditionnement d'air sous les tropiques*, a 1940 research report written by Egide Devroey, an engineer employed at the Ministry of Colonies and prominent member of the Institut Royal Colonial Belge. The book includes examples of good building practice in Congolese cities such as Léopoldville (Kinshasa) and Matadi, but also Lobito in Portuguese Angola, Surabaya in the Dutch Indies, and even Tripoli in Italian-ruled Libya. Much more technical in nature than Leplae's 1911 survey, Devroey's report made extensive use of the most up-to-date scientific insights drawn mainly from French and American sources, such as those of the *American Society of Heating and Ventilation Engineers*, which were international leaders in this emerging scientific discipline. Devroey, however, also made ample use of the work of a hitherto completely overlooked German engineer, Friedrich Vick, including several of his publications in the bibliography to his book, and inserting numerous illustrations in the main text taken from Vick's 1938 publication *Einfluss des tropischen Klimas auf Gestaltung und Konstruktion der Gebäude*.[40] An analysis of transfers of expertise within the more bureaucratic milieus of colonial departments of public works – administrative bodies that constitute what Peter Scriver has termed "the scaffolding of empire"[41] – provides an opportunity for mapping particular centers of knowledge production as well as techno-scientific networks in the domain of tropical construction that have been overlooked by most architectural historians so far.[42]

The practice of selective borrowing in the domain of tropical building continued throughout the colonial era. During the 1950s, Belgian architectural periodicals published several "tropical

[38] D. R. Headrick, *Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
[39] For an in-depth discussion of this debate, see J. Lagae, "In search of a 'comme chez soi': The ideal colonial house in Congo (1885-1960)," *Cahiers africains*, nos. 43-44 (2001): 239-82.
[40] German members of the Cost Action were completely unaware of Vick's work and confirmed that no work on him has been done so far.
[41] *The Scaffolding of Empire: Proceedings of the 4th Camea Symposium*, ed. P. Scriver (Adelaide: CAMEA, 2007); *idem*, "Empire-Building and Thinking in the Public Works Department of British India," *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, eds. P. Scriver and V. Prakash (London: Routledge, 2007), 69-92.
[42] A notable exception is the work of Jiat-Hwee Chang, "Building a (post)colonial Technoscientific Network: Tropical Architecture, Building Science and the Politics of Decolonization," *Third World Modernism. Architecture, Development and Identity*, ed. D. Lu (London: Routledge, 2011), 211-35.

modernist" projects from various regions, often used as sources of inspiration by architects designing for the Belgian Congo who never set foot in Africa. Many of them had subscriptions to the leading French periodicals, *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and *Techniques et Architecture*,[43] but these focused almost exclusively on buildings in *l'Afrique française*, while *Architectural Review* stuck to Britain's overseas territories. Belgian professional periodicals like *Rythme* or *La Maison* copied examples from both of these spheres of influence, while also drawing attention to other "best practices" in tropical architecture, such as the work of leading Brazilian Modernists, or the groundbreaking design of Antonin Raymond's Golconde Dormitory in Pondicherry, India.[44] Belgian architects also proved to be aware very early on of the British techno-scientific network on tropical architecture. Already by 1950, a seminal text by George Atkinson had been translated into French and published in a themed issue of *Rythme* devoted to architecture in Congo.[45]

However, the remarkable production of postwar architecture in Portuguese Africa (a subject of recent scholarship[46]), had no apparent influence in circles of Belgian Modernist architecture relating to Africa – perhaps understandable given that Portuguese architecture had little exposure in international architectural periodicals at the time. Nevertheless, the collection of official reports and publications on architecture held at the library of the former Ministry of Colonies in Brussels indicates that the bureaucratic milieu of the Public Works Department was well aware of architectural developments in Angola and Mozambique. It is telling in this respect that the Belgian architect Noël Van Malleghem, at the time active in Congo for the colonial authorities, delivered a paper at the 21st International Congress for Housing and Town Planning, held in Lisbon in 1952, and devoted to the theme "Housing in Tropical Climates". This event preceded the famous and often cited 1953 meeting on tropical architecture at the AA School in London by one year, and brought together a number of interesting experts on tropical construction.[47] Nevertheless, this conference and its participants have remained largely unnoticed in recent scholarship, testifying once again, in line with what Mercedes Volait notes

[43] The latter especially published a number of very influential articles on tropical architecture, see in particular the themed issue "Architecture intertropicale," *Techniques et Architecture,* nos. 5-6 (1952).
[44] For instance, see *Rythme* for June 1949 and no. 8 1950; *La Maison*, nos. 6, 7, and 8 (1951). For an in-depth discussion of this topic, see J. Lagae, *"Kongo zoals het is": Drie architectuurverhalen uit de Belgische kolonisatiegeschiedenis (1920-1960)*, unpublished PhD dissertation (Ghent University, 2002) vol. 1, 290-317.
[45] G. A. Atkinson, "Méthodes et techniques: Construire sous les tropiques," *Rythme*, no. 8 (1950) : 33-45. This text was published earlier in the *RIBA Journal* under the title "Design and Construction in the Tropics".
[46] For example, the work of Ana Vaz Milheiro or Ana Tostões.
[47] Especially the work of the French architect Henri-Jean Calsat, who was active in over fifty seven countries during the era of "les trentes glorieuses", and was a prominent voice at the 1952 Lisbon conference on "Housing in tropical climates".

above, of a strong historiographic bias from the Anglophone and Francophone "center". Yet, the case of the Belgian Congo, as well as that of Portugal for that matter, demonstrate that smaller colonial powers were often situated at the crossroads of transnational flows of expertise – something that ought to be recognised not only in their historiography but also the wider historiography of European imperialism.

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